



City of Lowell - Planning Board

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 17, 2022 6:30 p.m.
City Council Chamber, 2nd Floor, City Hall
City of Lowell, 375 Merrimack Street, Lowell, MA
Remote Participation Optional via Zoom

Note: These minutes are not completed verbatim. For a recording of the meeting, visit www.ltc.org

Members Present

Thomas Linnehan, Chairman
Gerard Frechette, Vice Chairman
Robert Malavich, Member
Richard Lockhart, Member
Caleb Cheng, Member

Members Absent

Sinead Gallivan, Associate Member

Others Present

Dylan Ricker, Associate Planner

A quorum of the Board was present. Chairman Linnehan called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

I. Minutes for Approval

October 3, 2022 Meeting Minutes

G. Frechette said the discussion for the Varum Ave and Lupine Rd applications were mixed on the minutes, he asked these be updated so the discussion's match.

G. Frechette motioned, and R. Lockhart seconded the motion to approve the minutes with the above amendment. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

September 8, 2022 Meeting Minutes

G. Frechette wanted to confirm the previously mentioned amendments would be added to the minutes.

G. Frechette motioned, and C. Cheng seconded the motion to approve the minutes with the previously mentioned amendments. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

II. New Business

Site Plan Review – 316 School Street, 01854

Colonial Gas Company has applied to the Lowell Planning Board to construct a new parking area within the footprint of the powerhouse building previously on the site. The subject property is located in the Light Industrial (LI) zoning district. The proposal requires Site Plan Review approval pursuant Section 11.4.2 to construct a parking lot with more than 4,000 square feet of impervious surface.

On Behalf:

Michael Mullaney, Applicant's Engineer

M. Mullaney said the project is to pave an area previously occupied by the Powerhouse Building on School and Rock Street. M. Mullaney said National Grid looked to get a demo permit a few years ago and obtained historic approval with the condition that a monument be erected to honor the building, the monument was to be a wall along the street resembling the façade of the historic Powerhouse Building. M. Mullaney said this was approved by the Historic Board.

M. Mullaney said the only new building proposed is the wall, and the reason this requires Site Plan Review is due to the size of the new parking area. M. Mullaney explained the plans including the size of the building that was demolished. M. Mullaney said there would be no new impervious surface. M. Mullaney said he met with the City's stormwater team, and they asked him to identify where the stormflows come from, and added that the soil on the site may be contaminated and adding stormwater storage to the site would make the problem worse. M. Mullaney said they are amenable to working with the stormwater team to meet their requirements.

M. Mullaney said the proposed light would be over the ROW and they will look to redesign them so they do not overhang over the ROW. M. Mullaney said they are amenable to a condition requiring a survey be completed and all work be confined to the subject property. M. Mullaney said the previous building was 30 feet high and constructed directly on the property lines. M. Mullaney said the wall would be in the same footprint. M. Mullaney said that in order to meet the corner clearance requirement the wall could be setback 15 feet from the corner to allow for a better site linem but this would require Historic Board approval.

M. Mullaney explained the proposed landscaping plan and said they are looking at only the newly paved area for calculations to meet the landscaping requirement. M. Mullaney said there would be 4 trees added to the site. M. Mullaney said there would be no additional traffic on the property.

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

R. Lockhart asked about the site lines at the corner of the building. M. Mullaney said they have reached out to the Historic Board to address this concern.

R. Lockhart asked about the need for the new parking spaces, and who the intended users are. M. Mullaney said National Grid are moving some staff from a location they are closing, and said the new parking area is for employee vehicles only, and they intend to separate service vehicles from passenger vehicles. M. Mullaney said certain areas are meant for National Grid work vehicles, and the new parking area is for staff and visitors.

R. Lockhart asked about the total landscaping requirement for the parking area. M. Mullaney said they are calculating based on only the new paved area and does not think it is fair to require the landscaping requirement be met for all of the pre-existing paving as well.

C. Cheng noted the pre-existing paving may have been there for a while, but the applicant is making changes to it, and the need depends on how substantial the changes are. C. Cheng said aside from site plan improvements there will be pedestrian improvements as well.

M. Mullaney discussed the proposed landscaping plan.

G. Frechette agreed that the proposal is an improvement. G. Frechette said it would have been beneficial to have had the opportunity to review the revised landscaping plan presented at the meeting. G. Frechette said he would like the Traffic Engineer to comment on removing the wall for better site lines. M. Mullaney said the decision should be left up to the Building Commissioner. M. Mullaney expressed concern since the wall was approved by the Historic Board.

G. Frechette expressed concern that the updated plans were not submitted prior to the meeting. G. Frechette expressed support for the landscaped buffer, and said he is supportive of the proposed improvements.

M. Mullaney said he would be happy to submit the plans to be reviewed the Board.

R. Malavich said he had no questions and said he would prefer street trees than landscaping within the parking area. R. Malavich said he has no major concerns. R. Malavich said an angled corner wall would be preferable to improve site lines.

R. Lockhart asked about redoing the sidewalks and wheelchair ramp in the area where the parking area meets the sidewalk. M. Mullaney said that if this is a condition then the applicant will look at it, and added that he believes the sidewalks are in good condition. T. Linnehan said this should be conditioned on Engineering Department approval.

T. Linnehan explained the proposed conditions, and said approval from the stormwater team would be a condition, as well as a landscaping plan.

Motion:

T. Linnehan motioned to approve the Site Plan Review with the following conditions:

- (1) The applicant shall obtain approval from the City stormwater team;
- (2) The applicant shall conduct a property line survey and all work will be done on the subject property;

- (3) The site line on the corner of Rock Street and School Street to be approved by the Engineering Department or the Transportation Department;
- (4) The applicant's landscaping plan shall include a 5 foot buffer zone after the end of the wall to lot entrance on Rock Street, and shall include at least four (4) trees; and
- (5) New concrete sidewalks and wheelchair ramps shall be added where the new parking area meets the sidewalk per Engineering Department approval.

R. Lockhart seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

III. Continued Business

III. Other Business

Election of Officers

The Planning Board will elect new Board officers for the upcoming year.

G. Frechette motioned, and R. Lockhart seconded the motion to nominate T. Linnehan as Chair. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

T. Linnehan motioned, and R. Malavich seconded the motion to nominate G. Frechette as Vice-Chair. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

T. Linnehan motioned, and G. Frechette seconded the motion to nominate R. Lockhart as second Vice-Chair. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

T. Linnehan motioned, and R. Lockhart seconded the motion to nominate G. Frechette as the Planning Board's representative to NMCOG. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

T. Linnehan motioned, and R. Malavich seconded the motion to nominate R. Lockhart as the Planning Board's representative to the Historic Board. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

IV. Notices

V. Further Comments from Planning Board Members

G. Frechette said the annual NMCOG meeting at UTEC will include a focus on regional resiliency, and economic recovery. G. Frechette said it is his hope that with the new Executive Director they get into regional solutions to the regional challenges.

G. Frechette gave an update on the first Master Plan Steering Committee. G. Frechette summarized that the process is beginning and there is a good involvement of people in the City. G. Frechette said land use and economic resiliency are likely to be important topics.

VI. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by T. Linnehan, seconded by R. Lockhart. The vote was unanimous (5-0). The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 PM.